

The Amazing Journey that Located the Lynch Pin

In 2014, Robert Roylance felt like he had found some convincing evidences regarding Book of Mormon geography, however there were some still some serious unanswered questions. His search area was primarily in Guatemala and Belize which was much different than the prevailing belief that it had to centered in area around the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. He originally thought that natural events had reformed the earth and hid the narrow neck in north central Guatemala. He thought that maybe some boreholes in some strategic locations would establish the possibility that changes in the earth had occurred over the two to three thousand years. He came up with a far-fetched idea that maybe there was someone that had made boreholes in Guatemala. So, he Googled for someone in Guatemala who had or could do some bore holing.

To his surprise Richard Terry's name came up and the rest is history. He was teaching Agronomy at BYU and had taken students to Maya land for twenty years and had bored holes in the ground to figure out Maya cropping and marketing systems. He was involved in over fifty scientific publications that focused on Maya and Olmec civilizations and has an extensive understanding of numerous sites that has been invaluable in establishing scientific proof of numerous Book of Mormon sites.

Richard's first question at their initial meeting was "where do the think the Sidon River is located. Robert's answer was met with pleasure when he said the Pasion. The next question was regarding Zarahemla and when Robert response was Ceibal it became the beginning of a long and exciting relationship.

Richard and his team spent considerable time evaluating the Olmec and Maya culture and became intimately aware of the amazing features that provided evidences that it was an excellent candidate for the city of Zarahemla.

In 1988, as Bob Roylance was passing through the Flores Guatemala airport, he was accosted by an enthusiastic tour guide that claimed he knew where a Book of Mormon city was. He tried to ignore him because he had planned to just go to Tikal the next day and head for home that evening. However, his claims were so convincing that we decided to take him up on it. He seemed very knowable and had been the supervisor for several significant Maya excavations. The next morning they headed out into the jungle in his old jalopy and after almost three hours we came to Pasion River.

They boarded a small boat and went upstream for about an hour and came to this amazing Maya city. Everything he said appeared to be true and after spending a half a day in the BYU Library he decided it had to be the city of Zarahemla.

Everything was put on hold for several years and then he had the opportunity of working with Dr. Richard Hauck for parts of two summers. In addition to Dr. Hauck there was Dr Ray and Deanna Matheny, Joe Anderson and for a short time Dr. Richard Terry. They were attempting to establish the Book of Mormon location of the Land of Nephi. And as it turned out they came up with forty pieces of evidence to essentially prove the Land of Nephi was located in Salama Valley. This was exactly what Roylance wanted to have here because it would give further credence to the fact that Ceiba was the city of Zarahemla.

Terry and Roylance then turned their attention to land of Cumorah. They still had hope that they would find the Narrow Neck of Land between two inland bodies of water. They had a belief that the Nephites could have made reference to inland bodies of waters as the East Sea and West Sea. After all they came from a country where they called lakes seas, Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea.

The scriptures are very clear that the land of Cumorah is to the northeast of the land of Zarahemla, so they did some extensive research in northern Belize and just over the Mexican border, What they found greatly exceeded their expectations, so they decently felt like they were on the right track. They also relied on numerous hypothetical maps the provided general information.

The target area turned out to be largely in northeastern Guatemala and the first site was the area between lake Peten Itza and lake Yaxha. However, the fortification the length of a day of Nephite was not there.

In some ways it was difficult to require such an impossible requirement to require a fortification that was at least ten miles long. It would have to be the largest structure in Maya land. Were we miss reading the scripture:

Helaman 4:7 And there they did fortify against the Lamanites, from the west sea, even unto the east; it being a day's journey for a Nephite, on the line which they had fortified and stationed their armies to defend their north country.

There are additional scriptures that reinforce Helaman 4:7 so they kept looking. You would think that something of that magnitude would be readily available.

Dr. Terry was able to recall an experience they had will working north of Tikal and finding themselves in a bottom of a trench and after doing further research they determined that it could be what they were look

Dr. Terry was able to obtain a research paper that outlined the entire ten-mile fortification that proved to be just what they were looking for. It took a few minutes for it to sink in on what just happened, but this discovery was the lynch pin validating the legitimacy of the Pasion River model.